

Getting creative with recruitment

Industry sector Support services

Client company Craft

Design consultancy Elmwood

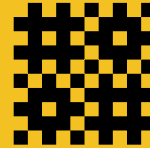
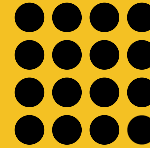
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elmwood

Executive summary



Recruitment agency Craft had just finished its first year of trading. Although it had made a small profit, it had fallen short of its turnover target. Founder, Dan Crowder, knew it was capable of achieving it but feared the agency lacked stand out in a competitive market.

Among recruitment agencies serving the creative industry, you might expect to see, well, one or two really creative brands. But among those covering the Leeds area, there were few, if any. Nonetheless, the market was highly contested, with many established players bidding for the attention of the area's agencies and brightest creative talent. Dan recognised the need for a strong brand that would position Craft as an active part of Leeds' creative community, rather than simply being in service to it.

Elmwood set about creating a brand that was memorable and distinctive, and one that would build mental availability among the target audience. As a small business, Craft prided itself on its uniquely personal approach, and the ability to offer a truly bespoke service to both candidates and agencies. With three brand colours, and 100 different patterns for each letter in Craft, Elmwood created 1 billion logo combinations, allowing each and every touch point to be as unique as its candidates.

Executive summary cont.



As a result, Craft has gone above and beyond its expectations:

Working with some of the biggest agencies in Leeds

Winning numerous regional and global design awards

Being named as a logo that defined 2015

Exponential growth in the number of applicants

An average annual increase of +127% in incoming clients

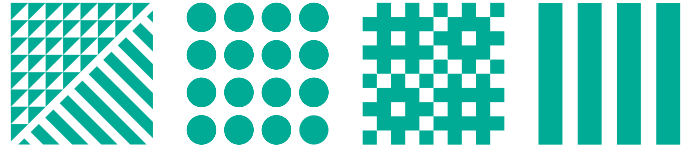
Annual turnover in excess of its +50% YOY target

Significant YOY profit gains

Outperforming the industry average for interview to hire rate by an annual average of +38ppts



Outline of brief



The challenge

Recruitment agency Craft launched in July 2014. The company had a 3-year business plan in place, setting out its objectives, but after the first year, results suggested it was falling short of target. The company had a web holding page, but for the most part was reliant on word of mouth to generate leads. Craft had ambitions to create a genuinely approachable business with authority in the market, that didn't rely solely on outgoing communications such as cold calling, etc. to develop relationships.

The business needed a strong brand that would clearly set it apart within a highly competitive market and position it as an agency that was actually part of the design scene, rather than simply an adjunct to it. The recruitment sector tended to follow a well-trodden path in branding terms and was ready for an injection of creativity. And as recruitment specialists serving the creative industry, taking an individual approach and building strong personal relationships with candidates and agencies, the visual identity for Craft had to be bright, fresh, and boldly different.

Objectives:

1. Create a stand out and memorable brand that would gain the respect and trust of the design community
2. Increase applications and incoming enquiries – i.e. amount of inbound business, from both agencies and applicants
3. Achieve target turnover for year two and year three (50% growth YOY)

Scope of work

Brand identity, stationery and brand assets.

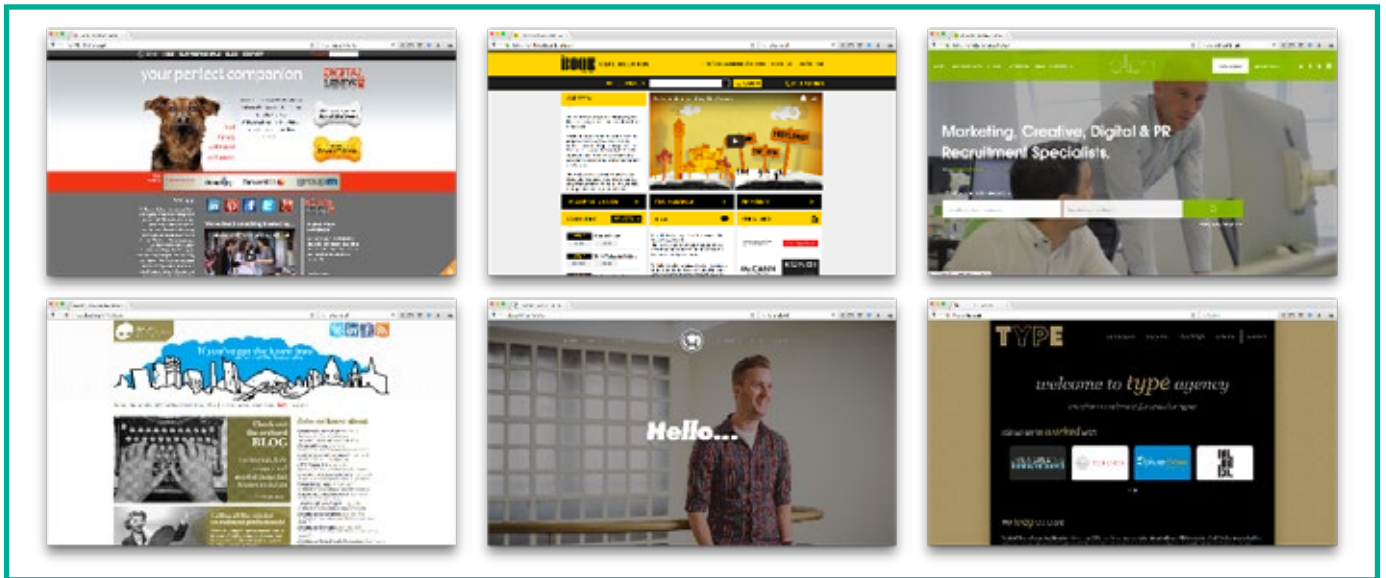
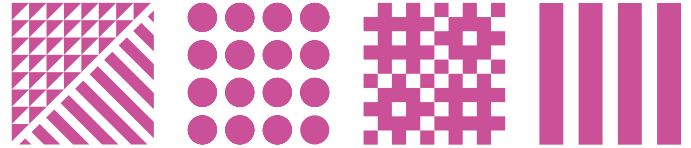
Strategic thinking

Following an audit of the local competition, Elmwood found that while rivals had a good online presence, the designs were poor. They were very generic and still felt quite corporate. Because the recruitment industry is known for being very impersonal and generic, the agency felt that Craft needed to do something completely different to stand out, in line with Craft's bespoke approach to recruitment.

Elmwood came up with the following positioning:

‘Approachable, bold and individual’. “Bright, fresh and boldly different, Craft offers an individual approach to recruitment. We pride ourselves on knowing our candidates and our agencies personally so we can fit the person to the place and vice versa.”

Description



Some of the local competition

About Craft

Recruiting for the creative industries is a lot more personal than for most industries – it's not just about finding the most qualified person for the job. It involves viewing portfolios and matching the right style of work with the right agency and vice versa, as well as the best cultural fit to allow creativity to flourish in the right way.

Craft is a creative, digital and marketing recruitment business, with a bespoke approach to finding the right fit. The agency, headed by Dan Crowder, has a genuine commitment to working with people in a way that suits them – job seekers and agencies alike. Craft offer a consultancy partnership that goes beyond the usual job-filling role of a recruitment agency; they are often requested to advise clients on team structure, salary bands and benefits.

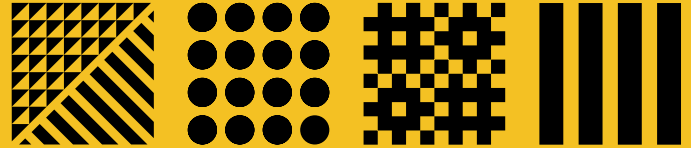
Background to the project

Dan's background was in recruitment; recruiting for lorry drivers and the like, before moving on to filling account management vacancies. He had built strong relationships with many of Yorkshire's most prestigious creative and digital outfits and knew the market inside out. So, that combined with his passion for design led him to setting up Craft.

Following his first year's results it was clear that he needed a brand that would stand out and win him credibility in his target market, in order to drive business. So he appointed Elmwood to do just that.



Case study overview



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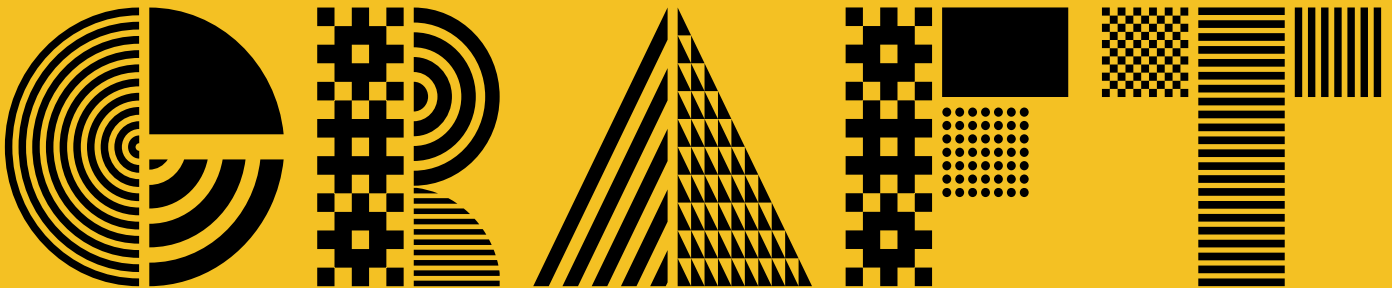
Design solution

To create a brand that was memorable and distinctive, with clear empathy and passion for design, our aim was to build mental availability among the target audience. We wanted designers to feel that Craft was the right career partner for them – not just a necessary evil in a step to new employment. We wanted to move the recruitment process from a transactional relationship to one driven by emotion.

Everyone is different

Craft recognises that no two job seekers or agencies are the same, and our flexible branding system puts this at the heart of the brand's ethos.

We created 100 versions of each letter, which allows for 10,000,000,000 (1 billion) different logo combinations – meaning that no two logos ever appear the same.

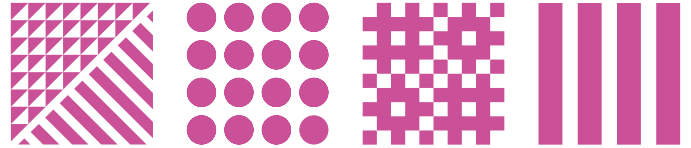


Creating the 100 different variations for each letter



Reviewing the different logo combinations

Case study overview



The concept is to create a consistent and yet completely unique brand experience for every interaction with Craft. With three distinctive brand colours, patterns and 100 different logos to play with, it's possible to make every touchpoint (including social media and digital comms) completely individual – just as every client and candidate is individual.

Additional standout

Three bold, fresh and impactful colours were chosen to provide a distinctive yet consistent look and feel to the brand. Along with the unique logo combinations, these colours give Craft additional standout in an already competitive market.

Scope of work delivered

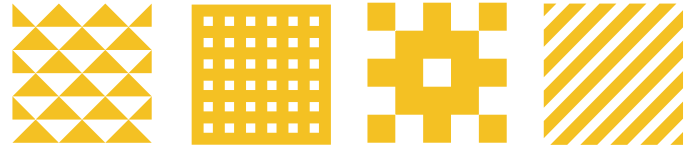
Brand positioning, social media icons, stationery and printed collateral.

And 1 billion logos

Collaboration

A local web agency designed and built Craft's website within the agency's brand vision and with continual feedback.

Market overview



Size and scale

According to The Recruitment & Employment Confederation (REC) turnover in 2014/15 was £31.5bn for the UK recruitment sector. That's a huge market, but by far the biggest segments were education, construction and healthcare, due to vast skills shortages in these areas (Agency Central).

Looking specifically at the recruitment scene in Leeds, the biggest sectors switched to finance, banking and insurance, with many major businesses such as First Direct and Yorkshire Bank being headquartered in the city.

In 2015 in the city alone there were 200+ recruitment agencies, but when you look at those specialising in the creative industries it dropped to just over 20 recruiting within a 30-mile radius of Leeds (Agency Central).

Obstacles

Within the recruitment sector as a whole, the biggest issue facing recruitment agencies is a talent shortage.

Business confidence in the creative sector had become fragile, with some agencies going out of business altogether. Against this background, it was more important than ever for agencies to get their recruitment right. That said, many agencies preferred to stay with known and trusted recruitment agencies for fear of employing the wrong person and having to go through the whole process again – a costly and disruptive exercise.

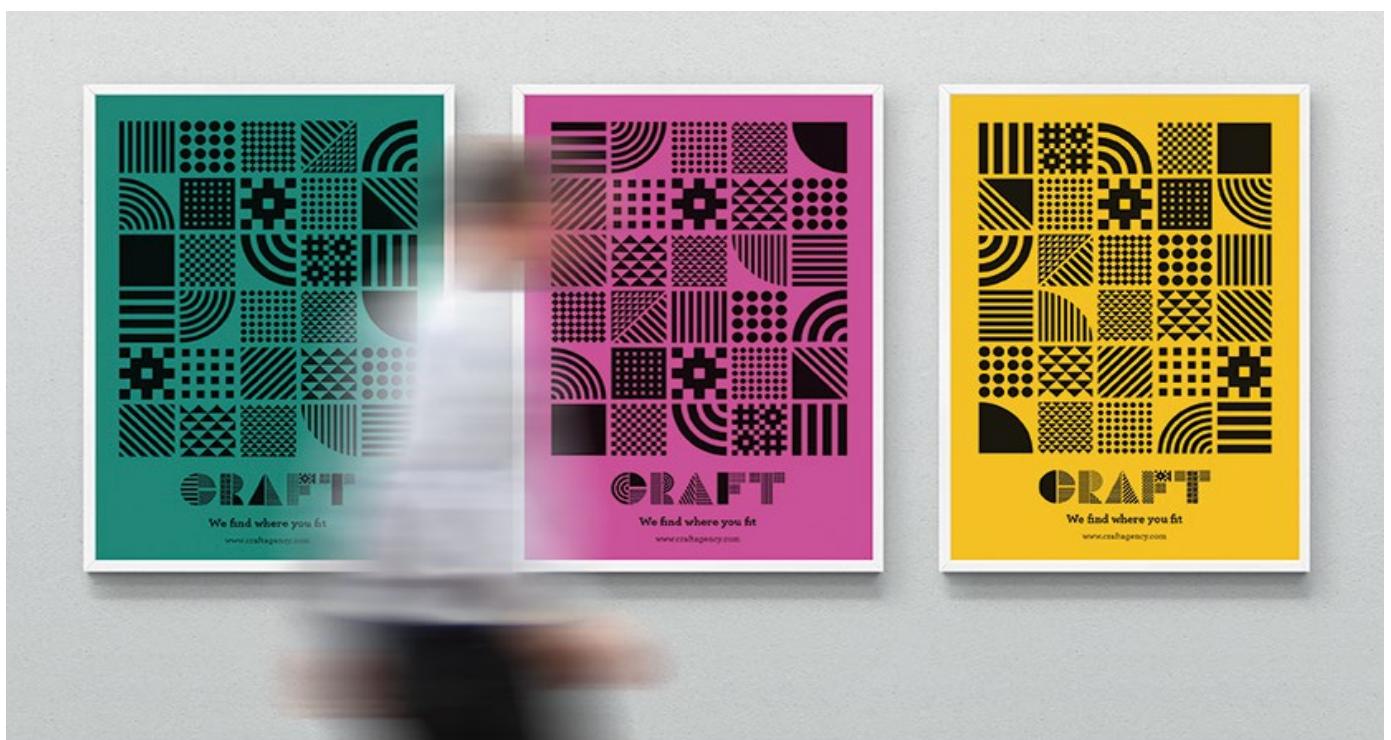
Although a relatively specialised industry, the creative and digital recruitment market in Yorkshire featured some strong competition – usually from small businesses with teams of up to five people.

In particular many of these companies have a strong online presence and speak well to their candidate base. But the branding and design is generally poor which means they lack the creative respect to which Craft aspired.

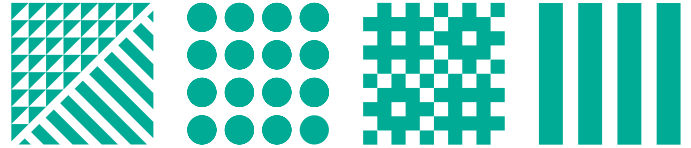
Key facts

Project launch: September 2015

Design fees: £20k



Results



Performance against original objectives

1. Create a stand out and memorable brand that would gain the respect and trust of the design community

Craft now has a brand positioning and identity that directly reflects the ethos of the agency's approach to recruitment.

Attracting the best

Craft has received hugely positive feedback from the agency community of Leeds – with many clients and candidates complementing them on their brand, and attributing their working together to the fact that 'they look like they know what they're doing'.

Several of Leeds' leading brand and design agencies now number themselves as clients, including Thompson Brand Partners, B&W Studio, Analogue and Robot Food. Three of these came directly from incoming enquiries – quite an achievement when these businesses already have long-standing relationships with recruitment agencies and are also inundated with approaches from others looking to work with them.

“When we're looking for freelancers or extra support it's imperative that anyone who helps us to find these people gets our industry and the creative standard we're looking for. From just looking at Craft both as a brand and from their website it was clear that they are on top of their game.”

Lauren Saville – Ilk Agency

Attracting candidates to be able to fill the positions Candidates confirm that the branding and online presence is important to them when finding a job in the creative industry:

“Looking for a position within web design can be difficult at times. The perception of a brand and how a company is portrayed online is very important to me and directly impacts my decision making process when looking at a potential role or for representation. It was a combination of these factors and positive word of mouth that made me choose Craft to represent me over another agency.”

Ben Marles – Job Seeker

“I approached Craft after finding they stood out among a sea of boring recruitment firms. The whole brand from identity to website is interesting and playful, immediately appealing to my creative side. And from every contact I have had with them I could not recommend them enough to my fellow creative peers.”

Greg Ball – Freelance Designer

Worldwide recognition

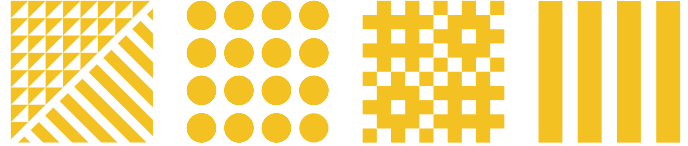
While the brand has totally achieved its objective of grabbing attention locally, it has also achieved worldwide recognition in numerous creative awards schemes, demonstrating how the brand has captured the imagination of the wider creative community:



A logo that defined 2015

Listed alongside the likes of Spotify, Google, Channel 4 and MTV, Craft was featured as one of seven 'Logos that defined 2015' in Design Week's round up of the year. Sure proof of a memorable brand that appeals to the design community.

Results



2. Increase applications and incoming enquiries – i.e. amount of inbound business, from both applicants and agencies

The new brand has transformed the way Craft does business. In the beginning, the agency would have to go out and find the brightest and the best, but after the launch of the new brand, increasingly they started approaching Craft directly.

This has meant that the agency does not need to pay to advertise on other channels (Creative Review, Design Week, The Guardian, Monster, Reed, Jobsite etc.) allowing them to keep their costs down by a considerable amount.

Increased number of applications from incoming enquiries/job applications

The number of incoming applications received from incoming enquiries increased 15 times in the year following the rebrand, and then a further 12 times in year three. In year 4, redacted confidential data.

Annual number of applications

	Pre Rebrand	Post Rebrand		
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
No. of incoming applications	*	*	*	*
Av. Per month	*	*	*	*

*Redacted confidential data.

Increased turnover from incoming clients*

Turnover from incoming clients has increased considerably YOY for three years running since the rebrand. And so has the percentage of which it contributes to overall turnover.

Annual turnover from incoming clients only

	Pre Rebrand	Post Rebrand		
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
% of overall turnover	20%	25%	46%	46%
% YOY increase	n/a	141%	166%	74%

*incoming clients - are 'incoming' for the first year, then become 'current clients'

3. Achieve target turnover for year two and year three (50% growth YOY)

Craft's target was to achieve +50% YOY growth in years two and three, which was also extended to year four in light of the agency's success.

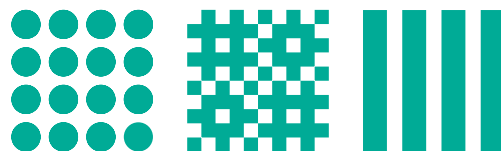
Annual turnover vs. target

	Pre rebrand	Post Rebrand		
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Target turnover (£k)	*	(+50%)	(+50%)	(+50%)
Achieved turnover (£k)	*	(+94%)	(+71%)	(+57%)
Percentage of target turnover	82%	106%	121%	127%
Profit (£k)	*	*	*	*
% YOY increase in profit	*	*	*	*

*In Crafts first year, redacted confidential data.

In the three years following the rebrand, turnover increased YOY by 94% in year 2, 71% in year 3 and 57% in year 4; showing consistently strong growth. Bust most impressively, redacted confidential data.

Scale and breadth of impact



“In the creative industry what ties everybody together is an appreciation of design and shared knowledge of the industry we work in. Using fresh thinking, bright colours and a truly bold approach, you have enabled us to earn the creative respect of our peers. Without doubt you have exceeded the brief and we’re absolutely delighted with the end result.”

Dan Crowder – Founder, Craft Agency

Clearly the client is happy with the end result and it’s no surprise why; not only has the branding gained the respect of the industry, but it has enabled Craft to increase the average fee charged over the three years.

Agencies are prepared to pay for the tailored and unique approach that Craft provides, as they know they are more likely to find the right fit first time, and less likely to have to go through the process again to find the right match. Annual average fee achieved, redacted confidential data.

Effectively, this means that the team at Craft can spend its time delivering its unique service for their agencies and candidates, rather than their own business development.

In comparison to industry averages, Craft is also out performing the market.

According to research by leading recruitment software provide, Jobvite, the industry average interview to hire ratio is 17%. In every year following the rebrand, Craft has considerably been above and beyond this average – 61% in year 1, 58% in year 2, 45% in year 3 and 62% in year 4.

And in terms of where you can clearly see that the brand has had an impact, you just need to look at the website statistics. Craft’s conversion rate from website visitor to applicant is 22.05%. The industry average is 11% (Jobvite).

In fact, since Craft’s newly branded website launched in October 2015, 35% of permanent recruitment revenue has come from candidates who have come directly from the website. And it is by far Craft’s biggest candidate source. And that’s with no external advertising costs.

In contrast, although the market has doubled in terms of the number of agencies since 2015, at least two of Craft’s competitors have had to drastically scale back their businesses. In Bullhorn’s 2018 Recruitment Trends Report Jeff Weidner, VP of Product Innovation at Monster says:

“Even when the candidate pool is small, it’s more about brand and how you’re engaging candidates. Those two things are most critical, not how many candidates there are.”

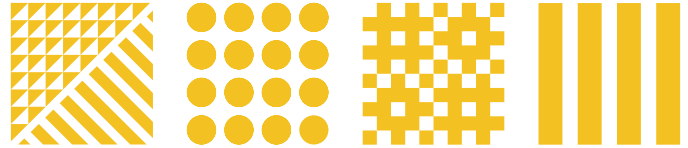
This is testament to Craft’s strong branding gaining the traction needed to keep it competitive in a difficult market.

A growing market

Specialist PR firm for the recruitment industry, ClearlyPR discovered from Companies House data that in 2017, the number of recruitment agencies doubled from that of 2015, leading to extensive competition. Managing Director, Paul MacKenzie-Cummins says;

“With more and more new agencies entering the industry, the need to position themselves as the agency-of-choice has never been greater, or harder. This has seen a sharp rise in the number of agencies ramping up their promotional activity.”

Other influencing factors



The competition has had to sit up and take notice as the Craft branding and distinctive attitude has clearly resulted in attracting and converting the best creative talent and agencies.

Tess Hill, Account Executive at Robot Food, praised Craft for its standout:

“Craft drew me in with their clear, confident message:

We’re all about the right fit. They seemed committed to the individual and had a strong sense of their own identity and purpose, which left me feeling assured. Craft is a bold, creative and considered brand which stands out amongst its corporate counterparts and challenges the recruitment industry norm.”

The only marketing activity that Craft undertook was the rebrand, social media activity and a series of events each year, in keeping with its approach of getting to know individuals.

Other marketing activities

From the beginning, Craft set out to be part of the agency community in Leeds. They have invested a lot of time writing blogs, positioning themselves as an authority in the Leeds agency scene. To date they’ve had 6,803 visitors to their blog since Sept 2015 – with topics ranging from interviews with Leeds-based creatives to monthly events and career advice.

This activity supports the company’s regular attendance at local industry events, through which they continue to build their network. They also develop business through referrals, email and calls to prospective clients as well as direct approaches to individual talent. But in all cases, the brand still has a role in converting these job seekers.

SEO strategy

Improved SEO has helped to increase traffic to the current Craft website and it ranks highly for key phrases such as: Design Recruitment Leeds, Creative Recruitment Leeds, and Digital Recruitment Leeds.

References & sources of information

All sales data supplied by Craft. Other information on the market from:

Agency Central | Bullhorn | Clearly PR | Design Week | Jobvite

Clearly, this influences the numbers of incoming enquiries from clients and candidates although success in this area can largely be traced back to the brand with coverage and links in publications such as Design Week helping to increase rankings. However, just because you can find Craft online doesn’t mean you’re going to choose to work with them – the brand has been instrumental in converting these leads to actual relationships, as can be seen by the website visitor to applicant ratio.

A link up with Indeed

From March 2016 the Craft site has been linked to Indeed to promote jobs – a move that has upped the candidate pool and extended reach. Referrals from Indeed account for 51.8% of total applications. However if you remove these applications from the equation – there is still a huge upward trend in applications from 17.23 per month in Y2, to 72.6 in Y3, and 157 in Y4.

Previous strong relationships

Revenue from clients with whom the founder had previously worked equates to just 3% of turnover!

Higher placement fee

The average recruitment fee that Craft has been able to charge has increased, but this has been because agencies are prepared to pay for the tailored and unique approach that Craft provides. They know they are less likely to have to go through the process again and again to find the right match.

The founder, Dan

Dan has been in recruitment for seven years. He knows the industry inside out, and he is great at what he does. Dan’s skills come into play when looking at conversion and hire rates – consistently well above average even before the rebrand. However, in order to convert applicants to placements you need to attract them, and that’s where the brand has played a large role in attracting applicants and agencies.