

Submission Title: *Sapience HR rebrand*
Industry Sector: *Support Services*
Client Company: *Sapience HR Ltd*

Design Consultancy: *Absolute*
Submission Date: *1st July 2016*
For Publication

YOUR ULTIMATE SLEEP GUARANTEE



ABSOLUTE.

2. Executive summary

Sue Hook had to make herself redundant from a board-level position in 2007 and so, having realised HR was under-valued in Cornwall, founded Sapience the same year.

Sue saw a rise over the next six years in local start-up HR companies, coupled with the 'big boys' offering packages to business nationally; she needed to stand out from the crowd.

Along with their PR agency, Absolute thoroughly reviewed products, brand, business journey and customer attitudes. Clients weren't aware of all Sapience's services, and, like most businesses, used HR reactively. Sapience saw an opportunity to change business culture from just 'cure' to 'prevention'.

This was the focus of their rise. Sapience would move from 'day-to-day', 'emergency' HR to offer proactive mentoring and human resources programmes to ambitious businesses.

The creative team brought together brand styling and tone of voice. A new colour palette and brand ethos along with a strapline - Empowering People, Unleashing Success - gave the company a focus and helped them stand out. Communication is key in consultancy: tone of voice and copy led the rebrand.

Impact was instant. In ten months, turnover rose by 45%, new clients by 24%, existing client spend by 22%. Website visits rose 27% far outstripping local competitors. The company has added another team member, increasing their size by a third.

The £6,000 design investment has seen an empowered, motivated team and an increase in sales locally. It has re-energised the founder, becoming almost an autonomous, self-sufficient helper in itself, while boosting the business's growth. The rebrand also gave the business a platform from which to sell their intellectual property online, as well as developing clear work streams for clients.

The new brand is winning new clients and Sapience is on course to meet and exceed all its objectives.

297 words

3. Project overview

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3. Project overview

The previous identity + communication style

A cartoon illustration by Nick Brentnall. A man in a green suit is standing on a wooden stand, looking surprised as a red apple is thrown at him. Another man in a blue suit is running towards him, having just thrown the apple. The background is a light green gradient.

**Do you need to update
your disciplinary policy?**

Quality HR Solutions
geared to your
business needs

Tel: 0845 602 1453
www.sapiencehr.co.uk






A cartoon illustration by Nick Brentnall. A man in a blue suit is sitting at a desk, looking stressed. He is surrounded by a large pile of papers, a red telephone, and a computer monitor. The background is a light blue gradient.

**Are you managing
your staff sickness?**

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Outline of project brief

-  To clearly differentiate Sapience.
-  To create a compelling brand to communicate how Sapience's proactive human resources delivers for a business.
-  To create a brand to help the company gain market share.
-  To create a brand with potential to expand.
-  To communicate their forward-thinking, informal but professional approach.

Goals

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| Short Term | To create and launch the new brand. |
| Medium Term | To help current and potential clients understand Sapience's strategic products. |
| Long Term | To drive sales of high value, strategic 'People Plus' offering. |
| | To increase sales, especially retained clients. |
| | To build the team and expertise. |
| | To build an online client base from zero to a new national offering. |
| | To grow the business overall. |

Project description

Selling business consultancy services is always a challenge:

A

"Business consultancy is based on mutual understanding and co-operation, they require a good rapport with their client and communicate effectively with your management. They should be able to comprehend not only your problems, but also your aspirations. They should make you feel immediately comfortable and totally at ease so that you can discuss your issues and deal with them, without any hesitation".^A

Sapience HR had grown, in nine years, from a one-consultant business supporting a small client base.

The founder's plan was for steady growth. She achieved this through being approachable, committed and knowledgeable. She didn't have a brand strategy, just a lot of drive and expertise. But with ambitious plans for targeted growth in 2012, Sue Hook recruited another experienced team member.

Business had reached a plateau. There was neither brand nor strategy, just a website. Competition was fierce, locally and nationally. Both partners were weary of providing day-to-day, 'emergency' support and finding it impossible to sell their strategic options.

Business consultancy is based on trust and relationships. To develop this into a brand was the challenge. The brand had to be approachable and to connect with clients, to behave like an individual. To stand out while doing the 'day-to-day' jobs, but also to reflect the founder's desire to tap into the potential – for clients and Sapience – inherent in proactive HR.

Sapience HR had previously used humour, through illustrations. However, sales were stagnant and this approach could have been seen as not serious enough.

A different style was required to ensure, firstly, that the company's care and professionalism were communicated and, secondly, that their higher yield products were centrally positioned.

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Overview of the market

Sapience HR has two main competitors.

Local HR businesses with a similar set-up who grow by similar means: via word of mouth, with core clients sustaining their business.

Large nationals who gain new business by searching tribunals and contacting desperate business owners. They rely on signing clients to retainers; their support can be 'one size fits all' and impersonal.

A business's relationship with HR is often reactive, especially SMEs without HR staff. Business typically comes from clients desperate to solve a staffing problem so they can just run their company. This was underlined by almost 96% of existing sales coming from reactive clients. The difficulty with this is sales are necessarily unpredictable, and the work required is immediate, high impact and stressful for all.

Globally, HR consultancies of all sizes use one of two routes to gain new business: either you encourage potential clients to fear reprisals or expense because they're getting it wrong, or you dress HR in technical, stuffy language and convince them they need specialists to decode it.

Sapience was doing neither, but neither was its approach clear or in keeping with the partners' beliefs. It also wasn't working, and did a disservice to their high standards.

B

"In the past, personnel administration was generally the processing of payroll, benefits and applications. Human resources strategy today involves executive leadership teams conferring with human resources experts to develop complementary goals for human resources and the overall business.

Today the importance businesses put on the recruitment and selection process of staff is seen as paramount in building a productive workforce. Developing a human resource strategy for recruiting and selecting the best employees is known to have an effect on a business's bottom line. Also, maintaining a workforce where employees enjoy high levels of job satisfaction and job security translates into a workforce that helps achieve business goals.

Human resources is your most valuable resource." ^B

Absolute saw that the key to creating new sales of strategic, bespoke programmes lay in encouraging new understanding among current clients. They also realised that it would be possible for Sapience to target potential new clients who were larger in terms of size and turnover, or with a more sophisticated understanding and greater ambition.

The team developed a 'human' approach: a straight-talking tone and a colourful style. These tools allowed Sapience to re-think how they communicated and to change their new business relationships from the panicked and reactive to the proactive and strategic.

849 words

Project Launch Date: Rebrand launch July 2015.

Design Budget: Total project Design Fee: £6,000.00 [excluding VAT]

Production: Total production costs: £2,900.00 [excluding VAT]

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4. Outline of design solution

The new brand identity

Primary logo



Packaged Services



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4. Outline of design solution

The new brand identity

Through workshops with the client and customer research,^C Absolute gained a deep understanding of the passion driving those in the business, an appreciation of the thought that goes into everything they do for their clients and of the business opportunity which existed for the provision of strategic services to a 'new breed' of clients.

Most clients weren't aware of the range of what Sapience had to offer and mainly engaged with Sapience when they had a problem to solve. It was clear that there needed to be a new, clearer, jargon-free approach which could engage with existing and new, ambitious clients.

'Straight Talking' became the main focus for the new brand identity.

"a joke, a pearl of wisdom, some advice, a friendly chat. It's all about open, honest conversation."^D

Absolute created a strong logotype with a bold font, and developed a colourful palette – both of which are a far cry from the clichéd, corporate offering of any competitors. Using a stylised speech mark for the asset subtly linked both to the overarching concept, and to a new, internal objective of simply opening conversations with new clients.

A new tone of voice and copy palette was developed to build on the company's refreshing personality. This had to balance understanding the stresses faced by leaders employing people, while also understanding a business's growth ambitions.

Questions like "What's keeping you up all night?" were positioned with the delivery of easy to understand Sapience solutions such as "Your ultimate sleep guarantee."

No matter the size of a business, HR challenges faced by leaders are personal and emotional, and a large majority of the solutions are people or team-based. Using a positive, accessible vernacular to unlock leaders' personal challenges and worries, the 'straight talking' copy palette rendered HR's complexities and Sapience's solutions-based approach in a personal and compelling new way.

Sapience's previous client communications had been wordy and complicated due to the team's desire for people to see the detail and the thinking. The new approach was radically different. The aim is to identify the simple, emotional need of the leader or the organisation and deliver straightforward, action-orientated strategies that immediately get to work on the challenge.

A new strapline, 'Empowering People, Unleashing Success', encapsulated the simple actions and results that Sapience delivers, whilst making obvious the importance of staff and the benefits of investing in HR.

Getting the copy right was crucial. This wasn't about simply selling another service. This was about making clear exactly how much Sapience understood their clients, how familiar (and fixable) their HR concerns were, and how immediately available the team are to 'switch on' these positive and proactive new strategies and programmes for those clients.

The same kind of warmth that informed the designs went into the copy, while new, separate but always accessible and 'straight talking' identities were created across the Sapience product range to communicate Sapience's diversity of services in easy-to-digest packages.

492 words

5. Summary of results

Increase in sales and change in sales patterns

Absolute understood completely the mindset of Sapience's clients and so were able to provide them with a new communications style and a range of fresh tools to engage immediately and emotionally with their clients in an 'I know how that feels' moment. In turn, by simplifying their services, and finding new ways to package tools for their clients, Sapience was now able to exhibit confidently at trade shows aimed at larger, more sophisticated businesses.

This proved to be a valuable place to meet new potential clients. The stand at their first ever trade show in May this year was inundated with enquiries for Sapience the company, not for the individual consultants. This was a defining moment for the founder, it was no longer 'all about her'. Within a year the brand had become what they wanted: strong, valued and the focus for clients.

In less than a year, the Sapience team saw a change in their sales patterns. Although focus has been on increasing sales to their existing clients and this had been successful, increasing their spend by 22%, they could now confidently upsell additional services in one call, where previously they had to hold several face-to-face meetings.

New clients immediately 'got' and trusted the brand, understood what Sapience were saying and saw the vital benefit of their support and services. The new Sapience brand and communication style, along with clear packaged support, saw clients immediately change to a proactive approach to buying their services, and sales increased.

New business saw growth of 24% through the launch of their HR support services and their website. This was a key part of the rebrand, to build their services into understandable, affordable packages. The HR support package sales far outstripped their growth hopes in the first year. New clients who have engaged with Sapience initially for ad-hoc work have grown by 24%. Prior to the rebrand, 96% of new business came from word of mouth, an unpredictable and mainly reactive route.

24%
INCREASE IN
NEW BUSINESS
IN THE FIRST
10 MONTHS

Following the rebrand, 20% of sales enquiries are now from their website. A certain amount of these are still as a reaction to an issue, but it's early days and Sapience are confident that these clients can and will transform their HR thinking and become more proactive.

Sapience's most prized new service is their 'People Plus' package – their high-yield strategic offering where Sapience works with senior staff to develop their strategy specific to their people and HR needs, in line with their vision and business plan. This is still in the early stages, and development is planned as one of their medium-term goals. However, 10% of their existing clients have already bought into this service, and are working through the bespoke programme.

To meet this demand, Sapience has already had to take on a new team member to deal with new business and to supply invaluable delivery support, planning and management for the key partners and new clients. This has added an additional third to the team and the size of the business and is already delivering rapid, rewarding results.

5. Summary of results

Increase in sales and change in sales patterns

Return on investment in 10 months July 2015 - May 2016*

Financial Year April-March

Sales in 2014/2015	£105,000.00
Sales in 2015/2016	£153,000.00 ^{*1}
Increase in sales	45%
Rebrand investment	£9,000
Return on Investment	533%

45%
INCREASE IN SALES
IN THE FIRST
10 MONTHS

533%
RETURN ON
REBRAND
INVESTMENT

^{*1} Including one fee earning consultant leaving the business in February 2016, on maternity leave.
Increase in sales - all figures -10 months July 2015 to May 2016 supplied by the client

^{*} *Increase in sales in the first ten months*

The increase in Sapience sales in their first year following rebrand was outstanding. In ten months, sales grew by 45%, all the more amazing considering the fact that for three of those ten months the company had only one fee-earning consultant due to maternity leave.

How the brand supported the business internally

“As a small team, we were working as hard as anyone possibly could, ‘shackled’ by the needs and demands of clients and the high intensity delivery required by our ‘emergency work.’ We will continue to provide this invaluable work and service for our clients, but we were deeply frustrated as we knew that we had the potential, and a deep desire, to deliver much more proactive and rewarding results for a whole raft of clients – but we couldn’t see the way.

The research process for the new brand, the development of the brand style and copy; and all of the resultant tools, have been transformative in enabling us to clearly identify who we are, why we are different and better than our competitors. The process has also clarified not just the actual products and services that we now deliver, but the deep-rooted and simple need for these products amongst our clients and our target clients.

The rebrand has been our key to empowering us as our people, in turn, unleash our success. The rebrand hasn’t just clarified the future of this business, it is the future of this business.”

Sue Hook, Founder

“
THE BRAND REALLY
HAS BECOME
MY RIGHT
HAND SUPPORT
”

How the brand supported the business internally

Seven months following the rebrand, Sue's other fee-earning expert had to take maternity leave, leaving the founder working 'like a swan' to keep the business focused and delivering. The rebrand gave clear focus and direction at a time when it would have been easy to lose sight of what the company was about. The rebrand became Sue's 'right hand support', providing necessary clarity and supporting her in ways she could not imagine.

Her mantra is 'it's a brand that keeps on giving'. In the design world, we talk about treating your brand like an important member of the team. The Sapience rebrand really has become a member of the team: a powerful point of reference for crucial decision-making and for clarity in the business's development.

By acquiring this standalone strength, the new Sapience brand gave clients confidence the company could continue to deliver in spite of the maternity leave period.

And this is key to how the brand works for the company internally too.

The brand embodies Sue's values and characteristics and she, naturally, personifies the brand. This means that practising what they preach is authentic and unforced for Sapience. It also means they can actually be – and are – the kind of company they encourage others to be, which clearly has an impact on their clients, staff and on everyone with whom they come into contact.

Thanks to this rebrand, Sapience transcends the virtues of its individuals. It has a name, a focus and a life independent of its people.

6. Other influencing factors

The rebrand has given Sapience the confidence to hold seminars, talk at business events and exhibit at Trade shows. This has increased brand awareness within the local business community.

Printed communication material has been produced as part of the rebrand and has connected with existing clients and helped build new business, all recommended by Absolute as part of the rebrand project.

None of this proactive marketing was done prior to the rebrand and has obviously helped with new business leads. The rebrand, however, has supported the business to achieve this and the platform to deliver it.

The major business trade show was in May 2016, after the figures published in this entry.

7. Research resources

- A** www.articlebase.com
'The characteristics of a good business consultant'
- B** www.smallbusiness.chron.com
Business Planning & Strategy
- C** Client research feedback
- D** Extract from Absolute's strategy document, Jan 2015

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C Extract from existing client feedback

No. of staff	How did you find out about Sapience?	What made you contact Sapience?	What services do you currently use?	What has been the impact?	Do you use any other companies?	Are you planning to use Sapience in the future?	What other services could Sapience offer that would benefit your business?	How could Sapience improve on their current offering?	What plans do you have to develop your staff in the future?
50	Recommendation	Needed help with a difficult member of staff	Difficult employees/situations, pregnancy & general regulations, masterclasses, contracts, gardening leave, exit interviews, disciplinarys	Took the stress away from us	Oxford Innovation - Conflict Management, Dealing with difficult situations, Potential Managers' course	Will fulfil current contract but thereafter may employ someone in-house	Sue delivered a course 'Dealing with People' which was really useful and more of this type of course would be beneficial	Would like Sapience to be more proactive and get more under the skin of the business to come up with bespoke solutions and training programmes	Have training budgets which are mostly used to develop business related knowledge/skills. Would like to do more around personal development for the staff i.e. soft skills
52	Googled - likes to use local companies	Needed help with employment law, disciplinarys, keeping on top of legislation. Wanted someone external rather than in-house	Contracts, disciplinarys (Sue will sometimes lead them when necessary), proofing letters, general advice	Peace of mind. Relieved stress. Reduced workload. Know they are always on top of regulations	Some of the staff are during NVQs (FOC) with C. College in fish preparation. Are likely to also do some management training with them	On a contract and will continue to use Sapience. They offer good value for money	Couldn't think of anything	Think what they offer is spot on - very personal service, prompt and someone is always available to help	
4	Recommendation	A small business with little resource who needed HR advice	Workshops, disciplinary, appraisals, monitoring sickness	Peace of mind. Know they can pick up the phone at any time and someone will be able to help. Business has become more efficient as a result	They have taken on an apprentice who is doing Bus Admin level 2 at Truro College	On a contract and will continue to use Sapience.	Couldn't think of anything	Nothing to add. Think Sue & Amanda are great and very knowledgeable. Enjoys working with Sapience	Nothing specific at present but this may change as the business grows.
7	Recommendation	Initially on behalf of someone else and then decided to use Sapience for themselves	Local, up to date compliance, rules & regulations. Employment advice, grievance procedures & disciplinarys	Helped move the business from a small, quite successful one to a medium, really successful one. The staff are now positive and fit for purpose which has resulted in more clients	Truro College and the University of St Mark & St John - Leadership & management training. All FOC	On a contract and will continue to use Sapience. They offer excellent constructive advice, are very supportive but also challenging when necessary. Would recommend to others	What is currently on offer is exactly what's needed for the business	The one to one work has been fantastic, but have found the masterclasses less useful as they are usually too generic	Yes, development of staff is ongoing with a lot of training done in-house. Doesn't foresee using Sapience for anything here
8	Had met Sue previously so was already aware	Had previously used lawyers for various issues and felt Sapience would be far better at helping with general issues and advice	Staff issues, contracts, sick pay/holiday pay advice, employment advice	Been comforting to know that there is always someone there who can help and who understands the business. Has saved on lawyer's fees.	Oxford Innovation for Business Development, Coaching workshops for all staff and personal one to one coaching	On a contract and will continue to use Sapience	Not really aware of anything and doesn't actually seek anything out	Feels the website with the cartoons looks outdated and if they didn't already know of Sapience, they probably wouldn't have contacted them based on the website	This is ongoing, but most development is primarily based around growing industry knowledge & skills
10	Recommendation	Specific personnel issues. Wanted someone local that could physically help	On a retainer so has a general support package. Helps with recruitment	Good to know there is a backstop when needed. Trust their advice. Has helped reduce stress	Oxford Innovation - high growth scheme and moving into leadership	Yes. On a contract	Haven't really reflected on what else is yet although would be open to suggestions re leadership/management training	Totally trusts Sue but can see this could be a problem for the future as Sue can't be everywhere so having additional well trained people would be good	Wants to develop in the areas of management training and project management
21	Via an email about one of their seminars	Interested in the training offered by the seminars. Were managing HR in house so wanted a better solution	On a contract which provides all general support necessary	Taken the pressure off existing resources and help streamline HR	Truro College Business - management training	Yes. On a contract	More seminars would be good as they find them very useful	Nothing to add. Very impressed with Sue and team and thinks packages on offer represent good value	Would like some of the team to have further training in Sales & Customer Services

D Extract from Absolute's strategy document on design directions Jan 2015

SAPIENCE HR


PHASE 1

ABSOLUTEDESIGN.CO.UK

A conversation

—04

A conversation, a joke, a pearl of wisdom, some advice, a friendly chat. It's all about open, honest conversation.



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